

Tips On Approaching and Dealing with Dogs

Blow your car horn or rattle the gate when you arrive at a house. This will alert the residents and will hopefully awaken any unfriendly dogs so you know where they are. Houses surrounded with thick hedges or bushes prevent you from seeing dogs. Don't proceed unless you are sure a dog is not around.

Know when a dog means business. A dog is supposed to be suspicious of strangers and protect their house. A housedog that sees an approaching stranger will usually bark. If the dog is snarling, its ears are erect, and it appears ready to attack, believe that it will and DO NOT APPROACH. Stay at a safe distance and call out to the owner. If you need to leave, back away facing the dog. Some dogs (Chihuahuas for example) may bite the moment you turn your back to leave. Don't run- unless you can run faster than the dog (which is rarely true).

Approach with caution. If the dog rushes to meet you, stand still and talk to it in a friendly but firm voice. Look at the top of its head or its chest; don't stare into the eyes (which is a sign of aggression). Don't try to pet the animal or bring your hand down to pat the top of its head.

Walk slowly toward the house. Don't swing your arm or anything in your hands as the dog may think you are attacking and defend itself by biting you. Humming or whistling may help convince the dog you are friendly.

If a dog becomes aggressive, pretending to pick up a stick or stone to throw may momentarily scare off the dog. This isn't useful if more than one dog is attacking.

Defend yourself with an object if you are attacked. If a dog is naturally ferocious, it will attack and if it does, it is going to bite. Defend yourself with an umbrella, handbag, book, coat, or any other object you have in your hands. Protect your head, face and neck by placing your elbow upright in front of your face. If you are knocked down, curl your body into a ball and protect your head and neck. Lie as still as possible.

Call before you go to homes with unfriendly dogs. Take note of homes with aggressive dogs. Insist that the dogs be tied or confined while you are there. Remind owners that anything with teeth can bite and dogs bite to protect their property. Owners are financially responsible for any damage their dog causes.

Check with the owner for licenses. This shows the dog has been vaccinated against rabies, an added protection for you.

Report problems with strays or unlicensed dogs and report all bites/scratches. Call the animal control agency for the area where the dogs live. In all unincorporated areas or the cities of Big Bear, Grand Terrace, Rancho Cucamonga, or Yucaipa, call 1-800-472-5609. If you are bitten, first see the doctor, then report the bite to Animal Control or the local police department.

Read and Heed the sign that says "Beware of Dogs!" This may save you the unnecessary pain of a dog bite and the anxiety of getting rabies.

San Bernardino County
Animal Care & Control Program
(800) 472-5609

